



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES
DIVISION OF EPIDEMIOLOGY, ENVIRONMENTAL AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
PO BOX 369
TRENTON, N.J. 08625-0369

JAMES E. MCGREEVEY
Governor

www.state.nj.us/health

CLIFTON R. LACY, M.D.
Commissioner

October 28, 2004

TO: Medical Directors of Long Term Care Facilities (LTCFs)
Director of Nursing of Long Term Care Facilities
Administrators of Long Term Care Facilities

FROM: Eddy A. Bresnitz, MD, MS
State Epidemiologist/Senior Assistant Commissioner

RE: Influenza Antiviral Medications

The purpose of this memorandum is to bring to your attention the latest CDC guidelines on the use of influenza antiviral medications for chemoprophylaxis and treatment in the context of the current influenza vaccine shortage. I am attaching copies of the October 22, 2004, CDC Guidelines entitled, *Antiviral Drugs and the Flu* as well as the October 18, 2004, CDC Guidelines entitled *Influenza Antiviral Medications: 2004-05 Interim Chemoprophylaxis and Treatment Guidelines*. I am also providing you with links to websites with information about influenza antiviral medications.

As facilities await final determination of their allotment of influenza vaccine to be received, it is prudent to review other important aspects of influenza prevention and control measures for this season. Specifically, it is appropriate that you engage in the following activities **before there is influenza activity detected in the community and in long-term care facilities**:

- Review and/or establish a plan that includes the appropriate use of influenza antiviral medications. Given our limited resources of vaccine and antiviral medications, developing a protocol for the use of antiviral agents for influenza treatment and control in your facility will be especially important this year.

As you review or establish a plan that considers the use of influenza antiviral medications, you might find the FDA Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER) site helpful:
<http://www.fda.gov/cder/drug/antivirals/influenza/default.htm>. In all circumstances, the clinician must weigh the increased risk of influenza and severe infection for unvaccinated individuals against treatment-associated adverse events.

- Establish basic infection control policies including procedures to promote Universal Respiratory Precautions.

The Department has produced materials for your use in providing Universal Respiratory Precautions (URP). These are available at: http://nj.gov/health/flu/documents/upr_healthcare_english041208.pdf

- Address the role of rapid-antigen testing and viral cultures for confirming a diagnosis of influenza and initiating antiviral therapy.
- Reinforce standard infection control precautions. Standard precautions are the basic level of infection control precautions and should be used in the care of all patients at all times.

If you have any questions regarding the information contained in this letter, contact the DHSS **through the Emergency Communications Center** (866-234-09645). This Center has been established through the *Office of the State Epidemiologist* to field influenza-related questions resulting from the vaccine shortage.

If you have any further questions after reviewing the resource material referred to in this memorandum, or need help accessing the references, please feel free to contact Elinor Fritz, RN, MA, Director, Long Term Care Assessment and Survey at (609) 633-8981, Martin T. Zanna, MD, MPH, Acting Director, Office of Planning and Development at (609) 943-3102 or Robert Morgan, MD, MA, MPH, FAAP, Medical Director, Vaccine Preventable Disease Program.

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Influenza Antiviral Medications: 2004-2005 Interim Chemoprophylaxis and Treatment Guidelines*, October 18, 2004. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/pdf/0405antiviralguide.pdf>

Antiviral Drugs and the Flu, October 22, 2004. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/antiviral/pdf/fluantivirals.pdf>

Antiviral Agents for Influenza: Background Information for Clinicians, December 16, 2003. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antiviralback.htm>

MMWR, *Prevention and Control of Influenza: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)*, May 28, 2004. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5306a1.htm>

Universal Respiratory Precautions Healthcare Settings Poster, October 12, 2004. Available at: http://nj.gov/health/flu/documents/upr_healthcare_english041208.pdf

It's Once More Way to Show You Care...Get Your Flu Vaccine. (brochure) Available at:
http://nj.gov/health/flu/flu_healthcare_worker_brochure.pdf

FDA/CDE website: <http://www.fda.gov/cder/drug/antivirals/influenza/default.htm>

Standard Precautions available on the following website:
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/infectioncontrol/pre/standard.html>

c Susan C. Reinhard, RN, Ph.D.
Deputy Commissioner, Senior Services